

The Halloween night collision scattered debris across Building 31's lawn and stairwell, broke the stairs and left the car embedded in the exterior wall, preventing students from leaving. The car was extracted within a few hours, but it is still not clear whether the building's structural integrity is safe for students. The building residents are in temporary housing until further notice.

GREGORIO OLIVARES GUTIERREZ

Mercury Staff

It is Halloween night — students are returning from classes and getting ready for the holiday in University Village. Computer science sophomore Angie Landin is preparing food in her apartment when a red Tesla suddenly accelerates and crashes directly into her kitchen wall.

Around 6:20 p.m. on Oct. 31, 2023, a esla driven by the mother of a UTD student attempting to park crashed into a gray Honda and accelerated onto the lawn of UV Building 31, throwing a bike rack and supporting roof pillar 10 feet away and removing a large piece of room 31105's exterior wall. Students contacted emergency services, and UTDPD, the Richardson Fire Department and UV administration arrived within minutes of the incident and spent the next 3 hours working to remove the car trapped within Building 31's walls. The stairwell is now ruined, and at least three residents have been displaced. While they were provided with new temporary housing, the displaced students' access to their possessions was limited and necessities such as toilet paper and food have not been provided. Matthew Grief, the associate vice president of University Housing, said in an email statement that the university was working with outside engineering, waterproofing, and contracting firms to get an understanding of the damage and begin work on repairs.

W

WE LOOKED OUTSIDE, AND IT WAS ABSOLUTE CHAOS. THE CAR WAS HITTING OUR WALL, AND THERE WAS JUST DEBRIS EVERYWHERE.

П

— Angie Landin

There is not yet a clear date for when displaced students will be able to move back to their original units.

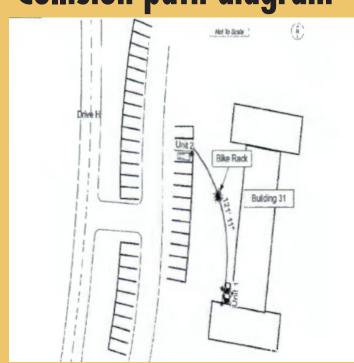
"I was in the kitchen with one of my roommates when the crash happened," Landin said. "At first we heard a loud sound, probably it going over the curb, and then the sound of it hitting a wall before it made impact with ours. The cupboards and the fridge immediately started shaking. Our washer- dryer door was jammed shut because of the hit."

Landin and her roommate were unable to leave their apartment until around 9:00 p.m. because of the blockage caused by the car and debris. Students quickly got the driver out of the vehicle and called 911; most of the first responders' time was spent getting the car unstuck from the building's outer wall and broken stairs. The car itself was a barrier that prevented those on the first floor from leaving, and the structural damage to the staircase kept those on the second floor trapped as well. The corner of the building is now sealed off with a blue tarp and the whole stairwell blocked by police tape.

"I was outside when this happened, the car drove right by me," Victoria Mckennon, a Building 31 resident and psychology junior, said. "I watched the whole thing happen ... I have never had an experience like that. I really wasn't processing everything that was going

SEE CRASH, PAGE 4

Collision path diagram



While parking, the driver accelerated instead of braking, hitting a parked car and bike rack before colliding with the building.

Farmer's Fridge: fresh food in a vending machine

UNAIZA KHAKOO Mercury Staff

Convenient and fresh, the Student Union's newest vending machine, Farmer's Fridge, gives Comets an option for grab-and-go foods as a healthier alternative for on-campus dining

Located between The Market and Halal Shack in the Student Union, Farmer's Fridge allows students to choose from a variety of packed salads, bowls, wraps and snacks that are nutritionally balanced and made in-house at their base in Chicago. Unlike the fast food options on campus, Farmer's Fridge has fresh

ingredients and meals that each contain a full serving of fruits or vegetables. The machine is open all hours that the Student Union is, including when other restaurants are closed. Menu items include a variety of both vegetar-

SEE FRIDGE, PAGE 4



Hoops for hearts: UTD basketball hosts fundraiser for local children



ARUSHI SHARMA | MERCURY STAFF

Before the teddy bear toss, local elementary school students were blindfolded and looked for the basketball while the crowd guided them by shouting "hot" or "cold."

KARLEY BOLENBAUGH
Mercury Staff

UTD Athletics partnered with Jamie's Heart foundation Nov. 8 to host the second annual teddy bear toss during UTD's first men's basketball game. The goal of the event was to provide emotional support to children currently in the ICU through stuffed animals, and in the first time-out of the game, Comets threw over 100 stuffed animals onto the court to donate to children with heart defects

The Comets played their first game of the season against district rivals The University of Dallas, losing 76 to 86. During time-out, over 100 stuffed animals from the court were donated to the Children's Medical Center in Dallas in an effort to bring awareness to Jamie's Heart Foundation, a nonprofit organization that provides financial assistance to children with congenital heart diseases. Tim Hannah and Corina Cross founded the orga-



THE MERCURY
UTDMERCURY.COM

Volume XXIII No. 09 Editor-in-Chief

Fatimah Azeem editor@utdmercury.com (972) 883-2287

Graphics Editor Katheryn Ho

Katheryn Ho graphics@utdmercury.co

Photo Editor Jason Sadhanandh

News Editor

Jack Sierputowski news@utdmercury.com

Life and Arts Editor

Mia Nguyen life@utdmercury.com

Opinion Editor Maria Shaikh opinioneditor@ utdmercury.com

> Web Editor Rainier Pederson web@utdmercury.com

Distribution Manager André Averion

Social Media Manager

Umama Suriya

Contributors Oluwaseun Adeyemi

Oluwaseun Adeyemi Aafiya Aslam Gregory Binu Prajeethreddy Bhuma Karley Bolenbaugh Grace Cowger Nisha Deborah Tejal Dhan

Iejal Dhan
Hridya Dhulipala
Yiyi Ding
Erin Gutschke
Zara Jamshed
Sarosh Ismail
Unaiza Khakoo
Storm Lasseter
Paola Martinez
Sofia Meinardus
Gregorio Olivares

Gutierrez Rainier Pederson Andrew Peters Alana Platt Jarin Priyosha Ashwin Sangareddypeta

Arushi Sharma Jacob Woodall Surjaditya Sarkar Shubham Shekhar Jha Anika Sultana Robert Tantiado

Corrections/

Bring factual errors or innacuracies to the attention of *The Mercury's* staff by emailing editor@utdmercury.com or calling (972) 883-2287 and a correction will be published in this space in

Media Adviser Jonathan Stewart jonathan.stewart@utdal-

Mailing Address 800 West Campbell Road, SU 24 Richardson, TX

75080-0688 **Newsroom** Student Union, Student Media

SU 1.601

The Mercury is published on Mondays, at two-week intervals during the long term of The University of Texas at Dallas, except holidays and exam periods, and once every four weeks during the sum-

Advertising is accepted by The Mercury on the basis that there is no discrimination by the advertiser in the offering of goods or services to any person, on any basis prohibited by applicable law. The publication of advertising in The Mercury does not constitute an endorsement of products or services by the newspaper, or the UTD admin-

Opinions expressed in The Mercury are those of the editor, the editorial board or the writer of the article. They are not necessarily the view of the UTD administration, the Board of Regents or the Student Media Operating Board.

Board.

The Mercury's editors retain the right to refuse or edit any submission based on libel, malice, spelling, grammar and style, and violations of Section 54.23 (f) (1-6) of UTD policy.

Copyright © 2022,
The University of Texas at Dallas. All articles, photographs and graphic assets, whether in print or online, may not be reproduced or republished in part or in whole without express written



Tiexas
Intercollegiate Press
Association
The Mercury is a proud
member of both the Associated Collegiate Press and
the Texas Intercollegiate
Press Association.

Volunteerism Events Blotter

All Events Require Registration

November 14, 9:00 a.m.

• Jonathan's Place works in providing safe spaces and resources for abused and neglected young adults. This project includes organizing donation and decorating their living spaces.



November 14, 1:30 p.m.

November 14, 1:30 p.m.

• Harvest Self-Care Community Garden Work Event: maintain garden for student consumption and donation.



November 15, 11:00 a.m.

Hunger & Homelessness Awareness
 Week resource fair will be held to address issues of food insecurity, housing and overall health and well-being.



November 15, 1:30 p.m.

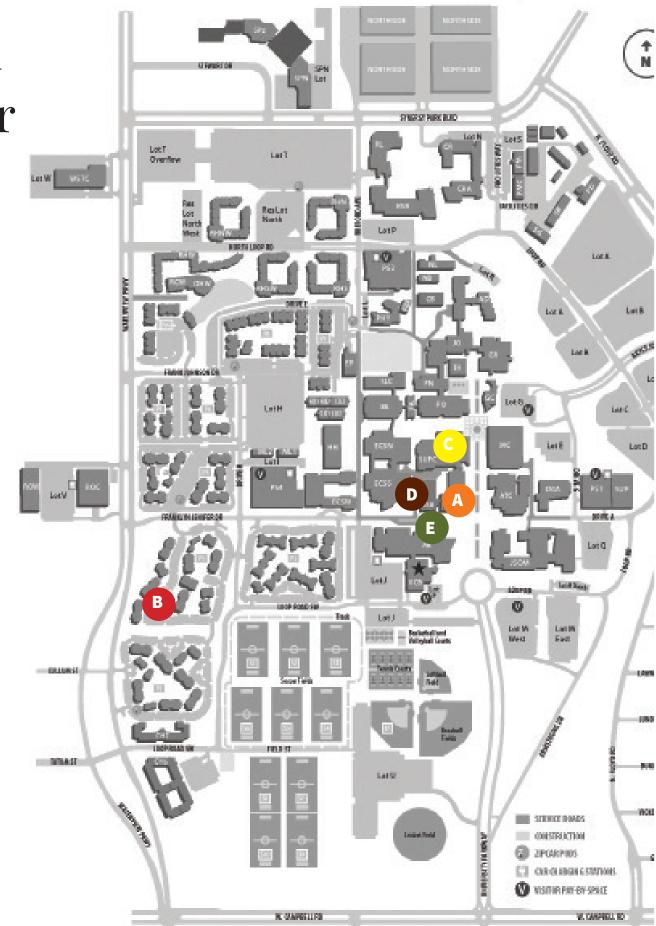
• Meal packing with the volunteer organization Feed My Starving Children. The meals will be hand packed and donated to FMSC food partners around the world.



November 16, 10:00 a.m.

• Blanketeers make a variety of blankets such as quilts, tied comforters, fleece blankets and crocheted or kniteed afghans. These blankets will be given as gifts to ill and truamutized children and teens.





From The Mercury Archives: November 17, 1986

Talk About

Reflections on expressions

By Carol Wood

An old fellow is sitting in the sun in front of a small gas station on the edge of town. A traveler stops by and asks, "What kind of people live in this town?" and the old fellow asks in return,

"What kind of people live in your town?"

With a smile, the traveler replies, "Oh, my town has a lot of friendly folks. They look out for each other and help each other out whenever they have a chance." The old fellow says, "Well, you'll like our town. It's just like yours." The traveler goes on.

The old fellow continues to sit in the sun and presently another traveler comes along. He also asks the old man, "What kind of people live in this town?" The old fellow asks,

"What kind of people live in your town?"

Frowning, the second traveler responds, "They are mean and nasty and cold. Nobody would throw a drowning man a rope." The old fellow says, "You'll feel right at home here. Our town is just like yours."

The point the old man makes--that each traveler will find a new town much as expected--reinforces many of my life experiences. For instance, before I ever moved to Houston for the first time, I knew I wouldn't like it--and I didn't. I knew it was a big, dirty town and (at the same time) the murder capital of the country.

So when I got there, I spent a lot of time locking doors and looking over my shoulder. And when I wasn't looking backwards, all I saw were grime and cars and

unfriendly people.

Only in retrospect can I find good things to say about Houston (and don't get me wrong, I still bad-mouth Houston every chance I get). I've lived there three separate times, and I finally realized something. Every time I lived there, I lived in a friendly neighborhood.

neighborhood.

When I decided to begin classes at UTD, any number of people told me how unfriendly this campus was, and after I got here, I heard a lot about student apathy.

Because I was only on campus a couple of classes my first semester, I didn't worry about being in an unfriendly place.

When I noticed that people smiled at me when I smiled at them it was a pleasant surprise.

One reason I smiled at people is because basically I am a very lazy person. Somewhere I read that it only takes seven muscles to smile and twice that many to frown. I don't want to spend any more energy than necessary putting an expression on my face.

However, another reason I smiled at people is because, again basically, I am very curious. People might reflect a frown with a frown and that is the end of communication, but when a smile is reflected by a smile, usually there is some verbal communication as well.

The point of this particular ramble is that my surroundings reflected me. When I looked for unfriendly people, I found them; when I was friendly, so were others.

Enough of this philosophy -here's the advice: smile, and save energy.

) MARS AND BEYON



providing a habitat for astronauts. This is one of multiple design assets the

team created.

Winning



Students design tools for Mars exploration

NISHA PHILIPS | Mercury Staff

Comet to Mars," a team from UTD with no aerospace background, defied expectations in NASA's Mars XR 2 Global Challenge — a science design competition — coming to a 13th global rank and second in the Americas out of nearly 4,000 competitors.

The team consisted of four ATEC majors — seniors Andrew Duarte and Michael Tran, and Evan Acuna and Chris Gauthier — as well as computer science and finance senior Alejandro Garcia. The competition unfolded in two distinct phases; in the first phase, participants were tasked with crafting a written report, outlining scenarios that astronauts might encounter on Mars. The second phase was the hands-on segment, where the team created assets including rovers and robot dogs tailored to the scenarios from the first phase. Although they came from diverse backgrounds, their shared desire to seize an opportunity that could enhance their professional and per-

sonal prospects served as the primary

The front end of the drill is powerful enough to penetrate Martian earth for building.

motivation for them to participate in this competition. Garcia said he wanted to participate in the competition both for personal and professional improvement.

"I am going into aerospace, before graduating I wanted to do something related to NASA," Garcia said. "And NASA is pretty cool to have on my resume and I am pretty sure that as my career continues to grow, I'll be able to stand out for the next opportunities I chase by having something completely outside what I was trained

Though the competition was predominantly an engineering challenge, the team brought a robust set of skills to the table, from 3D modeling to game development; it was their common interest for aerospace that brought them together. The assets that were developed were first sketched out in 2D, then modeled and animated using Unreal Engine and

Maya before being added

SEE NASA, PAGE 4

Drilldozer wheels are specially crafted to move over Mars's rocky surface which is filled with craters.

Robot Dog A robot dog, which carries tools for astronauts. Other designs the team created which are not featured here include the feared drilldozer and a tablet rendering

Students



EVAN ACUNA

CUTOUTS BY: JASON SADHANANI

Students across disciplines team up to solve global health problems



ASHWIN SANGAREDDYPETA | MERCURY STAFF

Pictured above is the winning team: Nicolas Hermoza, Fagun Shah, Anjana Mahadevan, Meghana Vadlamudi and Riya Thomas.

ZARA JAMSHED Mercury Staff

Two students launched UTD's first-ever

Interdisciplinary Global Health Case Competition, a contest where students across different schools come together to solve health crises affecting society.

The competition, pioneered by public policy junior Nandita Kumar and finance junior Avinash Chivakula, drew over 140 people,

three times more than expected. Student teams were given a case on a health issue in society and presented their case solutions to judges. Anjana Mahadevan, Fagun Shah, Meghana Vadlamudi, Nicolas Hermoza and Riya Thomas won the competition and will be the first team in UTD's history to compete in the Emory Morningside

SEE **HEALTH**, PAGE 4

Comets gather for largest hackathon in Texas

HackUTD returned to ECSW on Nov. 4 for the competition's 10th installment

AAFIYA ASLAM

A "drilldozer" — a drill that can break ground but also lay pipe and close ground as it passes.

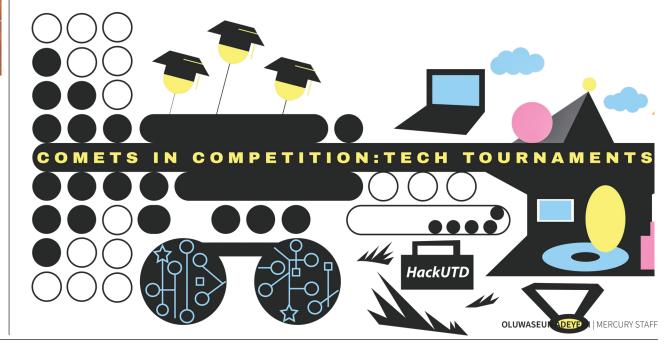
HackUTD is a weekend-long event where participants are given different challenges to solve by expressing themselves through technology. The 2023 hackathon included 1,200 people from the DFW area and even some from Canada. Prizes for each challenge were worth \$50,000, the largest amount HackUTD has distributed so far.

Computer science graduate student Michael Zhao joined the team in February 2022 as an organizer and is now the director of HackUTD. He participated in the eighth round of HackUTD and won first place, which made him want to contribute to organizing the competition. He said that the hackathon allows students to build real-life experience in software engineering beyond

courses and books.

"I think hackathons are one of the best ways to get those personal projects, get some achievements," Zhao said. "Under your belts in your own time. And it shows that you're interested in doing this sort of stuff, and you're willing to go do it on your own."

SEE HACK, PAGE 4



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

nization in 2007 to honor the legacy of their daughter Jamie, who passed away at the age of 2 from a congenital heart

condition. She loved stuffed animals and had all but her favorite, a bunny, donated to hospitals.

"It was a really cool thing for us to be able to work with them and have them be on the bench," men's basketball coach Jared Fleming said. "It was a cool thing for our guys to be a part of."

The UTD stands were packed with support from Comets, coordinated in part by marketing senior Megan Hanah's — Jamie's sister — communication with the foundation.

"I honestly think this was a better turnout than what I was expecting, so that was really great," Hannah said. "It seemed like all of athletics really showed up: baseball, soccer, softball, different clubs on campus and things like that."

Eight-year-old Brantly McBride was the event's guest of honor. Born with hypoplastic left heart syndrome, Jamie's Heart Foundation funded Mc-Bride's trip to Great Wolf Lodge after his heart transplant. According to Hannah, Jamie's Heart Foundation focuses on providing emotional and financial support for families throughout their journey.

"We're there for families in times of crisis and need," Hannah said. "But we also want to be there to celebrate the wins, because we understand that they may be far and few between."

Jamie's Heart Foundation was founded over 16 years ago in Washington and has recently expanded to the

DFW area. Hannah said Jamie's Heart Foundation hopes to make this partnership a recurring event, as well as see how the foundation can be further incorporated into UTD athletics.

"It's just making people aware that heart defects are underfunded, and people lack awareness of it," Hannah said. "So doing something like this is huge to hit people in the heart a little bit and make them aware."

The stuffed animals were donated to the Children's Medical Center in Dallas later that night to provide emotional support to children in the ICU. Jamie's Heart Foundation also hosts an embroidery program, a way to gift kids with their own personalized stuffed

"We know it seems so small, but it really does make a huge impact, and it made an impact on my sister," Hannah said. "It provided her with so much comfort, in every picture you look at, she has at least one stuffed animal next



ARUSHI SHARMA | MERCURY STAFF

NEWS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

AHT junior Cooper May, who also resides in Building 31, stores his bike on the bike rack; the car crash damaged its front pedal, tire and chain.

"At the time the wreck happened I was taking a nap on my super comfy living room couch when I suddenly heard a loud bang," May said. "I look outside my window and think

'Hey, where is the bike rack at?' because it is usually bolted into the concrete. I thought it was wacky, but then I somehow went back to sleep. I wake up an hour later and I see police lights in my window. I went out and saw that a red Tesla had crashed into my building."

According to the Richardson Fire Marshal's office and a report from UTDPD, the fire department responded to the 911 call in less than 10 minutes, reporting no injuries from the accident. UTDPD identified the driver but did not administer a test for alcohol or drugs. The police report said that after failing to stop, the car accelerated for 122 feet before crashing into Building 31.

"My apartment, I think, was the one that suffered the most damage, because it was the one with a huge chunk missing from the wall," AHT freshman Brandon Campbell said. "I thankfully

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

According to Alisa Model, a politi-

"Of course, it's not every day that

campus is really important, especially

for commuters or even if you [can't]

day in the fridge ... And so when I

heard about Farmer's Fridge, I was re-

wasn't in my apartment when it happened. I was returning from one of my classes and I saw a tow truck, firefighters and a lot of police cars. My first thought was that someone left the oven on and all my stuff burned down, but then I see the car and I think 'Holy crap, someone managed to get their car wedged in the building."

Campbell said that students were given 30 minutes to retrieve items from their apartments un-

ally excited because I've seen them in

other places and then the concept of

having fresh, healthy food options is

Food is made at a centralized

commissary in Chicago with ingre-

dients from Illinois. Once prepared,

the meals are shipped through-

out the country to their respective

fridges. Due to this transportation

time, meals in the UTD fridge are

generally produced 30 to 48 hours

before students see them available

for sale. Meals are dispensed in a

mason-jar-like container that can

be reused at home, returned to the

machine to be recycled or rinsed

and put into regular recycling bins.

However, if students want to keep

the jars, they must hand wash them

- they are not microwave or dish-

washer friendly. Unpurchased meals

that are still safe to eat are donated

to Feeding America, a nonprofit

network of food banks that operates

ing and animating the assets, which

"I was always there before any

problem could occur," Gracia said.

helped maintain their focus.

very appealing."

"We looked outside and it was absolute chaos," Landin said. "The car was hitting our wall and there was just debris every-

where."

nationwide.

der the supervision of Housing.

The driver, who wished to remain anonymous, said she regretted causing the accident.

"I'm still feeling so bad about it, it was an unfortunate situation that happened, and really, I still didn't come out of that," she said. "I feel really, really so sorry

"We are trying to make food as

accessible as your Snickers bar, your

candy bar, whatever you would get

from a vending machine," Matt Gu-

vula, Texas sales manager of Farm-

er's Fridge, said. "And I think not

only in the past 10 years we've been

in business, but the past two years

specifically, that idea and that goal

have become a lot more attainable."

2013, Farmer's Fridge has installed

1,000 fridges in cities all over the

United States — including in

UTD's Student Union and UT

Arlington's library. The company

started off by creating machines for

airports and healthcare spaces but

eventually expanded to universities.

very easy to get Chick-fil-A, Panda

Express, these fast-food type restau-

rants," Guvula said. "Our goal is to

make fresh foods just as accessible as

while remaining focused and com-

The team members showcased

their work by setting up a gallery at

ATEC to display the assets they had

developed for the challenge, with

some brought to life through 3D

"When I was on campus, it was

Started in Chicago, Illinois in

about that."

The driver said the crash was

caused by her brakes not work-

ing properly and that this is the

first accident she has had in 21

years. Until she can negotiate

with insurance, which will take

around four months, she will not

"I'm handicapped without a

This story is ongoing. Check

utdmercury.com for the latest up-

have access to a vehicle.

car now," she said.

those other offerings." Though the Farmer's Fridge brings new, healthier options to campus, it comes at a cost. Compared to salad meal kits at grocery stores, such as Walmart, which range from \$2.97 to \$4.98, the \$8 to \$10 that the vending machine charges are expensive. Additionally, meals in the Farmer's Fridge are intended to be one serving while many store-bought salads contain multiple servings for a lower price. However, compared to salad chains such as Salad And Go and Sweetgreen charging upwards of \$7 per meal, the price point of Farmer's

Fridge is put into perspective. Students can visit the Farmer's Fridge during regular Student Union hours. Through instructions in Farmer's Fridge app, UTD students can receive a \$9 coupon code to try the new dining options for

printing. An immersive VR experi-

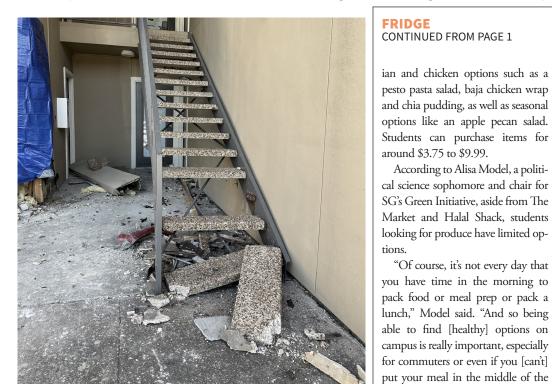
ence allowed visitors to step into the scenarios the team had envisioned and brought to life through models. "Everything coming together and

presenting it to the public was a real moment of pride," Acuna said.

pending on what further education

Kumar, who spearheaded the process of creating the competition with Chivakula, said she was proud to be behind the planning of the event.

"I'm also really excited to see how this continues on and how UTD can bring more interdisciplinary opportunities ... 'cause we've historically just been a STEM school It was very a surreal moment on that day ... And I can't believe I was a part of that ... And I'm really happy with how everything turned out for our first year."



GREGORIO OLIVARES GUTERRIEZ | MERCURY STAFF

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Global Health Case Competition.

For this year's case challenge, stu-

dents had to develop health action

plans for the specific circumstances

of indigenous people. Students had

to pick one of three indigenous

groups — the Navajo, Rohingya or

Inuit — and create a health care ac-

tion plan addressing a specific health

category such as maternal health or

child physical health. This includes

long-term sustainable strategies to

improve the health of the popula-

to the Martian XR environment provided by NASA. The team developed a total of 22 assets, from gemstones to gliders to robotic dogs, which they believe gave them an edge over their competitors as the other teams developed 2 to 3

The achievements of "Comet to Mars" serve as a testament to the team's creativity and collabora-

tion, policy initiatives to reach said

goal and allocations for \$6 million of

funding. Mahadevan, an economics

freshman on the pre-law track, said

her group focused on the Rohingya,

an indigenous group who have met

genocide at the hands of the govern-

ment of Myanmar. Mahadevan said

that as a result, many Rohingya have

fled to Bangladesh as refugees, where

they live in densely populated camps

without access to education, Internet

"In addition, there's high death

rates of parents," Mahadevan said.

"So, you have a lot of orphans here

or work licenses.

tion. Despite coming from different educational backgrounds, it was the competitive and collaborative spirit of the team that helped them perse-

While competing, each team member had autonomy in model-

and child-led families ... So they re-

ally have no way of building any sort

of self-sustainable economy or edu-

cating their youth and giving them

economic skills. So that's something

Hermoza, a neuroscience sopho-

"We wanted to work with chil-

dren because there's about 550,000

children who just went through a ter-

rible past and they're going through

a lot of mental health issues," Her-

moza said. "But there are very little

more, specified they wanted their

group's plan to address the mental

and physical health of the refugees.

we wanted to address."

"And I always tried to maintain the excitement and creativity which helped keep the collaborative spirit,

resources there to help them."

Kumar, a public policy sophomore and the case competition planning chair, said one of her goals for the competition was to make it interdisciplinary, as diverse skill sets will be essential to solving world problems. To compete, each team needed students from at least three different academic schools.

"A lot of us are pre-med, so we had a very science-based approach," Shah said. "But then when we discussed with our fifth person, she gives us a lot of insights into what we can do on the policy side ... And it helped me realize that any global health problem ... it's not just sciencebased, but there's a lot of policy that

Kumar said they wanted their judges to be from multiple professional disciplines as well. One judge was Pallavi Patil, a physician who specializes in surgical pathology.

"It was really good for the students to be exposed to these kinds of challenges early on in their training," Patil said. "That also enhances their perspective into larger needs at a worldwide level, and it might give them a more holistic exposure de-

HEALTH

HACK CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Kari Groszewska is a coach for Major League Hacking, or MLH, the official student hackathon league where coaches teach computer science skills to developers across the world for nine months. Groszewska discovered her love of hacking while attending Vanderbilt University and later became a hackathon organizer before joining MLH. She oversees 13 hackathons a month and said that UTD's competition was the largest she has ever attended. Groszewska said that UTD's hackathon can help students' education by supplementing it with resources from sponsors,

State Farm.

"We've got finance, we've got healthcare, we've got oil and gas, we've got natural resources ... all of those different industries have their own way of contributing to technology ... so it's a good way to bridge either your passion or interest in the tech space," Groszewska said. "As long as you have an interest in something related to what you're doing, it's

HackUTD's first year was in spring 2015, with only about 120 participants. Eight years later in 2023, it drew ten times as many. A year later, the competition received applications from more than 400

which included Toyota, Fidelity and participants ranging from UCLA to profession. University College London. Interest has also increased locally, which Zhao said may be due to the growing

tech industry in DFW. "I think one of the big things is the fact that now Dallas has so much technology," Zhao said. "We got tons of applications from inside UTD, and then just reached out to other schools ... having a network within Texas that helps us get a ton of people from all different places."

Now that HackUTD has successfully completed their 10th competition, they look forward to more fun projects from all fields of study; Groszewska said that basic knowledge of technology is important in every

"In this world where more tech is becoming more important and more prevalent, no matter what your background is ... eventually this can be a really, really good experience for you," Groszewska said.

Zhao's advice for future Hack-UTD participants who want to create a solvable hack is to keep an open mind and adapt to changes, as well as view the competition as a learning experience.

"Don't be afraid to learn new things," Zhao said. "If there's one place where you can try something and fail at it, it's a hackathon."



HRIDYA DHULIPALA | MERCURY STA

Students participating in the hackathon.

Secure at least two print and/or digital ad a cycle

Get paid 10% in ad revenue

Get marketing experience and get paid for it

Scan the QR code to apply



11.13 Sudoku

							5	4
	3			5		2		
9		4		3				
8	9			7				5 8
		3			4			8
1						9		
7						4		
			1		9		6	
3		6						

10.30 Sudoku key

1	6	2	9	4	7	3	8	5
7	4	5	3	2	8	9	1	6
8	9	3	6	1	5	7	4	2
6	1	8	2	9	3	4	5	7
2	5	7	4	8	1	6	3	9
9	3	4	5	7	6	8	2	1
5	8	6	1	3	9	2	7	4
3	2	1	7	6	4	5	9	8
4	7	9	8	5	2	1	6	3



Boo! key



BAG-GUY AND LIYA









ANDREW PETERS | MERCURY STAFF

A BUG SITUATION







RACHEL WOON | MERCURY STAFF

IMPENDING DOOM



ERIN GUTSCHKE | MERCURY STAFF

Boo! xword winners





Rudra Krishnamurthy







Cooper Brice



(From left) Eli Evans, Kara Curtis, Olivia Diacetes, Isabella Palazuelos

Strength in Numbers

Across

1 Sale condition 5 Japanese chess 10 Suggestions, for short 14 It's a long story 15 Cuts back

16 Get ___ on the knuckles
17 "While you were having
___ sex I mastered the
blockchain" (line from a
classic copypasta)

classic copypasta) 19 "It's c-c-c-cold!" 20 Fathers

21 ___ Problem of celestial mechanics 23 "Criminal Minds" org.

25 Unbiased 26 Camila Cabello hit with a repetitive title 30 Spoils

32 Anti-vaping ad, e.g. 35 ___ Mac

37 Synagogue scroll 39 Company emblem

40 More devious 42 Common clown name 43 "That's gonna be____

no from me." 45 Done with no difficulty, in slang

47 Tic-___-toe
48 Off base?
50 Many IM recipients
51 Fabled race loser

53 "I'll take that as ____"
54 A Beyoncé hit... or what the circled letters in this puzzle

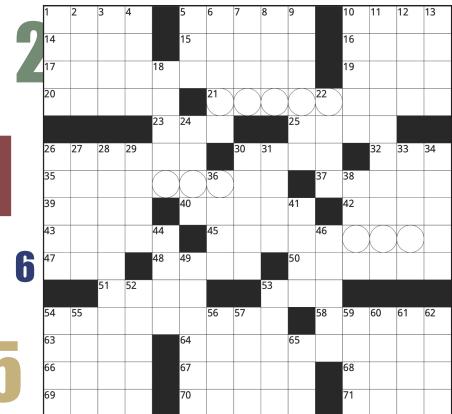
literally do 58 Leaves for lunch? 63 Picked locks?

64 Highly respected woman 66 Some pens and lighters 67 Happen next

68 "I ___ the opinion ..."
69 Will-___-wisp
70 Dirties

71 Je ne ___ quoi

Down
1 Egyptian snakes
2 Indian wrap
3 Disney CEO Bob who retired and then unretired



4 Identical
5 Mar.-to-Jun. season
6 Caribbean country mentioned
by Nicki Minaj in "Bottoms Up"
7 Sports MD's specialty
8 Equipment
9 Remains
10 37-across expert
11 Likely to screw up
12 Check proof of age
13 Nimble

13 Nimble 18 Similarly overweight 22 Sunrise direction 24 Luxury German 26 A neighbor

26 A neighbor 27 Hilo hello 28 Big believers'

place 29 "To ___ not to ..." 30 Shade of blue 31 Poems of praise

33 Cavalry weapon
34 Nautical greetings
36 Bread spread
38 Ancient Greek coin
41 Actor Gosling
44 North Texas public transit
agency
46 ____ Tracks (ice cream flavor)
49 Thick-heeled shoes
52 Win by ___
53 Invalidate, as a marriage
54 Baja resort
55 "Snap out ___!"

52 Win by ____
53 Invalidate, as a marria
54 Baja resort
55 "Snap out ____!"
56 Yes-___ question
57 "Now, where ____?"
59 Some govt. lawyers
60 The Dalai ___
61 Mine, in Marseille
62 Dict. entries
65 ____ Moines, lowa







Men's soccer claims ASC title after mixed season

The team took home the title for the first time in four years and are heading to the NCAA Division Championships

STORM LASSETER

Mercury Staff

The UTD men's soccer team came back from a season of mixed performance, securing their spot in the NCAA national tournament after winning the ASC conference championship on Nov. 4 in a narrow 6-5 win against long-time rival Concordia.

The men's soccer team claimed their sixth ASC title, their first in four years, after powering through a mixed bag of wins and losses through the season. Coach Jason Hirsch said that this season had its share of ups and downs, but he trusted that his team could run right through the adversity into a streak of incredible victories; UTD accumulated wins against Ozarks, McMurry and Hardin-Baylor. Finance junior Riley O'Donnell was named ASC Offensive Player of the Year as well as All-Conference First Team along with finance senior Kayson Marriott. O'Donnell scored six goals and four assists, while Marriott recorded a goal and an assist.

"We were right there competing in every single game," Hirsch said. "[We] have to be able to take the loss on the chin and move on. You take the success and build from there and try to springboard to more success."

The team began the season with a streak of losses and ties in five close games against nationally-ranked teams. After the Comets' first win on Sept. 17 against Colorado College, everything started to click, and the team enjoyed a six-game winning streak from then to Oct. 12.

"You can take different steps to turn your season around," Marriott said. "[Our freshmen] get to experience how it feels winning now. How to go from the lowest of lows in a



Spirit were high on Nov. 4 when the men's soccer team became ASC champions for the sixth time in UTD history, the first time they have claimed the title in four years.

season to the highest of highs."

This streak propelled them into the conference tournament, with wins against Ozarks, McMurry and Hardin-Baylor. Accounting junior Michael Hesse said the wins were a huge moral boost for the team, and they were

confident they would not get defeated on their home turf on game day.

"This is the goal of the year," Hesse said. "Our confidence at home was through the roof ... We beat Ozarks 5-1, which is a huge game for us."

The season is ending, but it is not over yet for the Comets, with the NCAA Division III championships in January. The team is confident going into this tournament, and team spirit has never been higher.

"I feel so proud of these guys, and I am so

happy for them," Hirsch said. "They wanted this so bad. For them to finally get over that hump and win it ... I am so happy for these guys, and proud of what they did, and they should be proud. They played well these last few games and deserve it."

Women's soccer team knocked out of ASC

SAROSH ISMAIL

After executing an almost flawless season, the women's soccer team was knocked out of the American Southwest Conference championships after suffering a 3-0 loss to McMurry in the quarterfinal tournament on Oct. 31.

The team drew against McMurry on Oct. 28, securing their spot in the championship. Outside of their quarterfinal loss, the women's soccer team was almost undefeated this season, with only two losses. The Comets also tied with Mary Hardin-Baylor for second fewest losses in a season and broke the record with seven ties. Assistant coach Rachel Holden said this was the Comets' best season in recent years.

"[Our] expectations were very high of the girls," Holden said. "We wanted the best season and to go out with a bang, which we did. It was better than the last year and the year before, so they definitely met our expectations."

Starting this season, the Comets were led by new head coach Stephen Shirley, who has a long history in the sport. Shirley was a collegiate player and gained his first coaching experience at Montrose as their director of soccer academy and reserve team assistant coach. He also was a volunteer coach for the Comets from 2016-17. Shirley led practices with a different dynamic that proved effective with the team's advancement to the championship.

"I think this season's coaching staff



UTD ATHLETICS | COURTES)

SEE WOMEN, PAGE 7

Melanie Marchant hugs her teammates after scoring a goal against Ozarks on Oct. 7.

frequent changes to make us more suc-

was not fearful of taking risks or making cessful," senior midfielder Sierra Foster

UTD chess players place highly in Texas Intercollegiate Rapids



Daggupati vs. Calvary, Texas Online Rapids Championship

Previous website: 65. Ne1 Bc1 66. Kd3 Kf2

White to move. How can white get an advantage?

a dneen. bly promote a white pawn to to his king, preparing to kill the Black's pawns and possi-White moves his knight closer

Ba3 69. Nc6 Kf4 70. Nd8 Answer: 67. Nc2 Kf3 68. Nb4



Wang vs. Walmer, Texas Online Rapids Championship (2023)

Previous website: 18. Nxf3 Bxb2 19. Qxb2

Black to move. How can black open the position?

and push for a checkmate. vance on White's back rank making the position un-balanced. This opens the e file, allowing black to ad-wanse on Mhits's back rank Black moves pawn to d4,

Answer: 19....4420. exd4 Nxd4

AAFIYA ASLAM

Two UTD students placed highly in the Texas Collegiate Rapids Championship Nov. 4, one making No. 2 overall and the other No. 1 out of players under

The Rapids Championship was an online chess tournament where 40 players from seven schools faced each other individually; 14 students from UTD participated. The tournament consisted of seven rounds, and each round was 10 minutes per game per player with five seconds of delay. Two of UTD's participants placed highly in the tournament. Computer science freshman Balaji Daggupati from the UTD Chess Team placed No. 2 overall, and data science freshman Benjamin Walmer from the Reserve team placed first in the U2200

Grandmaster Daggupati won five games, lost one game and drew one game. His most challenging game was with physics freshman Louis-Alexandre Calvary, a member of UTD's Reserve team. As Daggaputi has a higher rating, FIDE 2477 compared to Calvary's

1616, he assumed the match would be easy. However, Calvary played stronger than Daggaputi expected, causing Daggaputi to mess up the beginning of the game. Despite the unpredictable play, he managed to win.

"As pieces simplified, it became very dead draw-ish, but I was able to trick him in the end and the time scramble," Daggupati said.

Walmer won three games, lost one game, and drew one game. His opponent in the first round was unable to play, causing him to win by default. Walmer said he previously focused on an aggressive approach to trick his opponents, but as he became more experienced, he changed his strategy.

"I play more solid now to kind of outplay it and possibly win against my opponents," Walmer said. "So I kind of took a slow approach to this tournament ... it worked out pretty well."

Walmer said his most interesting game in this tournament was his match against international master Tianqi Wang from University of Texas Rio

SEE CHESS, PAGE 7

Omega Strikers place first

TEJAL DHAN

UTD Esports' Omega Strikers team is currently ranked No. 1 in the Collegiate Corestrike League after seven wins in the fall 2023 tournament which began Sept. 20. With 56 teams competing in the league, UTD Esports is left with one final game to secure their position as national champions.

Omega Strikers is a 3v3 game in which both teams attempt to get a puck into the opposing team's goal. UTD's team for the game has been active since 2022, with three players and one substitute. Computer engineering sophomore, Andrew "W1nDoge" Harper-Hill, said that their first-place rank was an accomplishment because they beat two teams that originally held that posi-

"We knew we were going to do pretty well, at least put up a fight," Harper-Hill said. "But I think we showed up and did well against those top two teams. And recently we did have one loss ... and that was a little devastating. Obviously, it's not fun to always be the top team and lose to a team lower than you in the rankings, even though they were beat by the teams we beat. But I was happy that we were ranked one and still are."

Harper-Hill said that in addition to training individually at home, the team members practice as a group for around four to eight hours a week, watching other team's games and participating in scrimmages that simulate real games.

"I think what brought us, or what is keeping us at the top, is that we have three good players," Harper-Hill said. "Everyone plays their role pretty well, and if we keep on working with those roles and trying to improve, at least somewhat think about what everyone else is doing and how everyone else is like, what they have to deal with in the game, then ... it helps us work togeth-

Daniyal "BluBlazing" Ghayasuddin, team captain and accounting junior, said that he was inspired to play the game competitively after placing in the

SEE OMEGA, PAGE 7

The end of a season: volleyball highlights and top players from 2023

ANDRÉ AVERION Mercury Staff

Comet volleyball's 2023 season came to an end on Nov. 8 with no. 5 standing in the American Southwest Confer-

The season started rough with a seven game losing streak, but through a trail by fire, the women's team changed the competitive scene and attitude during the midseason and end semester, making for an impressive sports comeback lead-

ing into their ASC appearance. They placed 17 individual records this season as well as placing third in overall stats before the ASC tournament.

Freshman outside hitter Bailey Schievelbein proved herself an offensive powerhouse in her debut season for the Comets, scoring 259 kills by the end of the season. In one match alone, Schievelbein scored 27 kills against Howard Payne Sept. 23 with 27 kills. This cemented UTD's victory in their first game in the ASC conference season, overturned the team's losing streak and eternalized Schievelbein in the UTD Record Book for both the second most individual kills recorded overall and most kills recorded in a four-set match.

Visit utdmercury.com for the rest of this story and more sports highlights.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

top 20 during the game's alpha

"I guess that kind of passion stuck with me, especially going back into collegiate, because this is the first season that a collegiate tournament has been in a league for Omega Strikers ... I think that was a big moment for us, especially for me, I can play against colleges and showcase, 'Hey, I'm a good player'," Ghayasuddin said.

UTD Esports Omega Strikers receives coaching from Matthew "Daftgrass" Caporale, a student at East Carolina University, who said that the team's synergy is key to their success — something that was developed through team

friendships. He said that compared to other schools, UTD's team uses a variety of in-game characters, setting them apart from competitors.

"They're able to adapt," Caporale said. "They're able to pick a wide variety of character choices compared to the start of the season. And I think that's just their biggest advantage over some of these other teams that ... if they're not on a specific character, they give themselves a less great chance to win the match."

Despite their seven wins and single loss throughout the season, Caporale believes developing a stronger mentality and focusing on games individually could help the team secure the No. 1 position. Beyond the current tournament, Ghayasuddin

said that he wants the team to win future seasons as well but is mostly hoping for the collegiate scene of Omega Strikers to expand further.

"[We want to try] telling the [developers] to really make this game moreso about collegiate and getting it more into different spaces to promote the game," Ghayasuddin said. "'Cause that's one thing we don't want is the game, to lose a lot of its members as it has been, unfortunately, for the past few months. [We want to] gain some more members, gain a lot of players to compete in collegiate and keep the sport strong, because we love it at UT



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

said. "We switched through several formations throughout the season, [which] forced all the players to be more knowledgeable about everyone's role on the field. When you know the duties of your teammates, it is easier to be an effective communicator and leader."

Women's soccer has a history of a fighting spirit, with a record of scoring last-minute goals and catching up to win or tie against the opposing team. In their game against Centenary, the Comets made a goal in the nick of time, with five minutes left to spare.

"The overall fight of the

team was very good," Holden seasons are short, and you only throughout practices, and they have that mindset where [even if] it is not your best day, you still try to get the job done."

Three of the team's 11 seniors had injuries last year, which stopped them from playing. The seniors — Foster, Ashlynn Thomas and Kate Crowe were able to play the entirety of the season this year and have been the top goal scorers on the

"Being out for the majority of last season made me realize how much I missed playing soccer," Foster said. "Once I got cleared by the doctors, I knew I wanted to make the most of the time I had left on the field. The

said. "The girls kept pushing have so many opportunities to make vour mark.

> Freshman defender Jenna Wilkinson said that while the team's individual skills are a strength, the relationship between the teammates is one of the best parts of being on the Comets. The comradery is visible during the game as they celebrate each win and exchange encouragement for each loss.

"Everyone knows how to lift each other up, and we are always there for one another," Wilkinson said. "There's actual friendship not just because we are on the same team. I hope that as [the team moves] forward everyone can continue to be a family.'

Having broken the record for most undefeated games in a row in a season, the team expected to make it further than the quarterfinals. However, the Comets were still successful, breaking team records and winning against teams like Trinity, who they historically have lost

"I am extremely proud of how the team played throughout the season," Foster said. "Unfortunately, our season ended in the quarterfinal, but I am hopeful that Coach Shirley will continue to grow the team and take them further in the following

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Grande Valley. Wang played very quickly, putting pressure on Walmer to keep up. By the finish, Wang only used 30 seconds of the 10-minute game while Walmer used half of his time. While the game's position of the game was somewhat equal, Walmer was able to trade pieces and secure a win.

"D4 ... it was kind of a hard move to play because I knew I had a lot less time, but I feel like I was creating some imbalance," Walmer said.

As the tournament was hosted online, both players were required to be on a Zoom call to prevent any cheating. Despite the lack of technical difficulties, both Daggaputi and Wang said they would prefer to compete inperson for the experience of being with great players.

"I'm not too much of a fan of online play because of the problem of cheating, but these tournaments, I'm fine to play because a lot of these players, at least I've known or I've seen them around enough," Daggupati said.

Both players said the competition was a good casual play option as they prepare for the American Open and US Masters in late November.

"It was a good, short tournament, good for training, good for showcasing skills, and it was fun to play," Daggupati said.



MEN'S SOCCER







VOLLEYBALL







MEN'S GOLF



"The Marvels" soar to new heights with leading women trio

The Marvel Cinematic Universe refreshes their fifth phase with empowering storytelling for new generation of fans



"The Marvels" brilliantly rings in a new era of Marvel films that reignites the heart and joy of the franchise in a way that has been missing from recent releases.

The Marvel Cinematic Universe, or MCU, is a groundbreaking franchise that has built its expansive storytelling over the years, leading up to the highly anticipated film, "The Marvels." Bringing together characters from "Ms. Marvel," "WandaVision" and "Captain Marvel," the movie follows Iman Vellani as Kamala Khan, Teyonah Parris as Monica Rambeau and Brie Larson as Carol Danvers as the characters navigate switching places with one another whenever they use their superhero powers. If that was not enough, the newly formed team has to defeat the warprincess Dar-Benn as she seeks revenge on Cap-

tain Marvel. After a recent slump in Marvel movie quality with letdowns like "Ant Man: Quantumania," I had high hopes that "The Marvels" would surprise me and bring back the classic adventurepacked, characterdriven model that made me fall in love with the franchise. I think I speak for most fans when I say that "The Marvels" had big shoes to fill. In particular, I was excited to see the return of Kamala Khan's character, because her Pakistani American background and bubbly personality made me feel seen and connected to Marvel in a

way I had never felt before. My parents rarely watch American television, but "Ms. Marvel" was the exception because it had elements of our hometown, religion and our culture seeped into it.

the lightheat brought to whispered in species of in secret.

I was beginning to get tired of three-hour long Marvel films that made up for a lack of plot with overdone CGI and incoherent action sequences. "The Marvels" was not that. Instead, the action sequences were artfully intertwined with the storytelling. Watching Carol, Monica and Kamala learn how to fight Dar-Benn and not one another as they took control of their swapping predicament made for fight scenes that seemed intentional and thematically relevant. I enjoyed seeing the growth from early scenes where there was

clear frustration and pushback to the climax where each hero worked in tandem. The flourishing teamwork in the action sequences mirrored the sisterlike relationship dynamic that was established throughout the film. In addition, I was excited to see a predominantly female cast in a generally male-dominated genre. Though Marvel has introduced plenty of female characters over the years, there is something unique about seeing three strong female heroes team up to fight an equally strong female villain. My favorite Marvel mov-

felt scenes. The "Guardians of the Galaxy" films and "Thor: Ragnarök" are perfect examples of this concept. Though it does not quite live up to the legendary status of these films in my personal ranking, "The Marvels" does hold its own and surpasses "Black Widow" and "The Eternals" by far. I especially enjoyed the lighthearted, quippy dynamic that Kamala's family brought to the movie. All their little Urdu phrases or whispered prayers made me feel like Marvel personally investigated my family, made duplicates and put them

ies consistently strike a

proper balance between

action, comedy and heart-

After the end credits scene, I left the theater wanting to rewatch all the previous films and do a deep dive into comic history — the mark of a truly well-done superhero film. If "The Marvels" is any indicator, the next phase of the MCU will be new and different, but also fun and adventurous.

The Roses 'Dusk to Dawn' tour lights up texas



SOFIA MEINARDUS | MERCURY STAF

GRACE COWGER | MERCURY STAFF

SOFIA MEINARDUS Mercury Staff

K-rock band The Rose delivered an electrifying performance on Nov. 5 at the Texas Trust CU Theatre in Grand Prairie, Texas, leaving their devoted fanbase spell-bound as part of their sensational Dawn to Dusk U.S./Canada tour.

The Rose continues to be a fast-rising group on the music scene, with a Nov. 5 attendance of over 4,000 fans. From the

moment fans — called Black Roses — walked into the theatre, a buzz of anticipation filled the cool air. The night was alive with light chatter as fans eagerly awaited the start of the concert and took to merchandise lines to secure souvenirs. At 8:00 p.m., seats were filled, and a hush fell upon the crowd as the lights dimmed. The opening notes of "Eclipse" reverber-

SEE **THE ROSE**, PAGE 10



YIYI DING | 1

Families often decorate altars with cempazúchitl flowers (marigolds), and put their loved ones' favorite foods, beverages, along with portraits of the deceased to welcome the souls of their lost family members on this cultural holiday.

Dia de los Muertos symposium explores 'Emotional Nepantla' to bridge cultural gaps

PAOLA MARTINEZ

Mercury Staff

The "Dia De Muertos Symposium: 'Emotional Nepantla'," a two-day event presented by the Center for U.S.-Latin America Initiatives, or CUSLAI, highlighted the internal struggles of living between two cultures as an American Latino in the United States

The symposium included a storytelling event on Nov. 1 and a CUSLAI community digital archive project breakfast with

Delegad@s, graduate students involved with the center. Nov. 2 featured a lunch panel event discussion with U.S.-Mexico border author and advocate Francisco Cantu as well as environmental border advocate and singer/songwriter Rita Cantu. CUSLAI also has a "Dia de Muertos Living Altar" exhibit available to students in the AHT Gallery until Nov. 14.

"We're both research and an advocacy program for the university for the Latin American community," Delegad@s fellow Isabella Palazuelos said. "We specifically focus a lot on border work. We interview people who have experienced crossing the

UTD has an 18% Hispanic population among undergraduates and a 13% Hispanic ethnicity overall as of 2022. However, *The Mercury* published a story with survey evidence showing many Hispanic or Latino students do not feel represented

SEE **MUERTOS**, PAGE 9

Sofia Coppola puts a bow on female isolation in the heart of Graceland

MIA NGUYEN Life & Arts Editor

A bold, jet black cat eye, a full set of false lashes and a comically voluminous bouffant hairdo is how the world came to know Priscilla Presley. Queen of female isolation, director Sophia Coppola dissects a lonely woman's life and marriage and forces audiences to view a timeless icon as a beast through the piercing blue eyes of "Priscilla."

The film serves as a timeline of Priscilla's life starting when she meets an al-

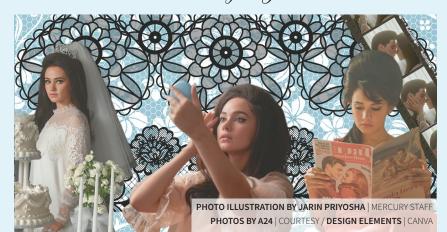
ready famous Elvis. A 24-year-old Elvis finds himself enamored with Priscilla's as a 14-year-old schoolgirl, and they begin a romantic relationship that any 60s fangirl could only dream of. The relationship loses its charm quickly, however, as Elvis' controlling demeanor clashes with Priscilla's lovesick nature.

Coppola previously directed "The Virgin Suicides" and "Marie Antoninette," and this delicate feminine aesthetic transfers to "Priscilla" perfectly. With muted pastels, bold character

fashion, and emphasis on facial expressions, the director focuses on strong imagery to convey the complexities of being a young woman yearning for human connection. Loneliness is a common theme in her films and the audience members feel as insignificant as Priscilla as she is constantly pushed away by her husband and left alone in a world she doesn't understand.

The acting is impeccable. Priscilla is

SEE **PRISCILLA**, PAGE 9



Does Temoc belong on a calendar?

GREGORIO OLIVARES GUTIERREZ

Mercury Staff

Temoc is a constant presence on the UTD campus, bouncing between his glass prison in the Visitor Center, freshman orientations, graduations, seasonal parties and more. However, one place Temoc has yet to appear is on a calendar.

Calendars have been in use for at least 10,000 years, according to the archeological discovery of an ancient lunar calendar in Scotland. Since then, a myriad of societies have developed their own calendars to reflect their culture: Mayan, Chinese, Islamic, Julian and Gregorian calendars have all been widely used throughout history. Calendars are typically solar, lunar or lunisolar, but none of these approaches address the desire within UTD students for a Comet-centric calendar.

The Mercury conducted a survey of the student body regarding their thoughts on a Temoc-themed calendar, with responses from 48 current students and alumni. 92% of respondents said they would support a calendar that features Temoc. 69% said they would prefer a specialty Temoc fireman style calendar over a regular Temoc themed calendar. 75% of respondents said they would purchase "Pride Temoc," "pictures of the campus throughout the seasons" and "all of the various forms of Temoc," like the one depicted for Rec Fest.

"Social media will put out Temoc as Santa in front of the fireplace or some really goofy Temoc Valentine photos, and so I collect these images," EPPS Dean Jennifer Holmes said. "I would love to have a whole calendar of Temoc. I think it would be fantastic."

Holmes has been with UTD since 1998, which coincides with the creation date of our school mascot. Temoc has gone through several design iterations, including the original Temoc, which can be found locked inside a display case in the UTD Visitor Center. In recent years, Temoc has been making the rounds with mascot awards. In 2023, he was named one of the top five national collegiate mascots by the Dance Team Union. In 2022, he was named one of the top four collegiate mascots by the National Cheerleading Association. And in 2023, Temoc even found himself in the national Mascot Hall of Fame in Indiana.

"I think that schools should have a great sense of school pride and spirit," Douglas Dow, associate dean of the Honors College, said. "I think that mascots and the branding of mascots are a central part of that. Having Temoc, who isn't immediately identifiable as a comet, helps define this unique, nerdy, culture that



RAINIER PEDERSON | MERCURY STAFF

tine's Day, there is a Temoc image — durart which could be used to create one. ing COVID there was even a COVID-19

"I honestly think that whenever faculty get a promotion, we should have Temoc," Holmes said. "I think he should be at all of our celebrations."

Price will be a major point of interest for any groups that take on Holmes' call for a themed calendar - 56% of surveyed students said they would pay a maximum of \$10 for a Temoc calendar. To meet this price point while still raising funds, bulk purchases from companies

SEE **TEMOC**, PAGE 10



Freddy's Fazbear comes alive in "Five Nights at Freddy" film

PAOLA MARTINEZ

Most of Gen Z remembers the thrill of watching their favorite gamers attempting to make it through the night at Freddy's Pizzeria, or even playing the iconic horror game themselves - and delighting in its extensive lore and terrifying jump scares. The Oct. 27 film adaption of the game remixed series lore, giving the movie a fresh but still interesting plot, while its massive, murderous animatronics perfectly evoked the original's fear.

The classic video game "Five Nights at Freddy's" garnered a massive fanbase after its release in 2014, and fans dressed in casual cosplay flocked to theatres to watch the live action adaptation directed by Emma Tammi. "Five Nights at Freddy's" the movie follows security guard Mike Schmidt (Josh Hutcherson) who accepts a job at Freddy Fazbear's Pizzeria, a restaurant that has been abandoned since the '80s. On his first day on the job, Mike quickly realizes that this security gig will not be as easy as he thought. Following the premise of the game, Mike discovers that the pizzeria's animatronics come to life at night with a thirst for blood.

The FNaF movie made changes to the canon storyline which left hardcore fans of the video game disappointed. One thing the film did right by the lore was to make William Afton the antagonist and maintain the core of what makes FNaF terrifying — seemingly innocent

SEE FNAF, PAGE 10

'Newsies' production reflects life of modern students

virus Temoc," Holmes said. "I think the

student body should make the calendar.

It could be an incredible fundraiser or

Student Government senators Sneha

Shrinivas and Avinash Chivakula are in

support for the creation of a Temoc cal-

endar, although there is not currently an

effort by SG to create a calendar. Howev-

er, events like Rec Fest and regular photo-

shoots by the Comet Spirit program have

ensured there is a wide variety of Temoc

Student Government effort."



Jack Kelly and Katherine Plumber begin their relationship with disdain, but eventually the two are bonded by their shared goals of ending the strike, leading to a romantic relationship.

ZARA JAMSHED Mercury Staff

Dow said Temoc plays a key part with-

in the unique culture of the school, and

that this can be used to the advantage of

the school as the student body grows and

develops. Even the mascot's name goes

beyond typical naming conventions ac-

cording to Dow, and to brand Temoc on

a calendar would allow further unique

branding for the school and its spirit. A

calendar could also allow for prominent

locations around campus to be displayed

"Anything from 4th of July to Valen-

and advertised.

UTD's theater produced and directed the "Newsies" Broadway Musical on campus from Nov. 1 to Nov. 5. Its brilliant acting and gorgeous visuals brought to life an inspiring story of workers taking on powerful corporations and winning despite the odds.

"Newsies" is set in New York City and follows Jack Kelly, a rebellious young newsboy that takes matters into his own hands when publishing giant Joseph Pulitzer raises newspaper prices. The musical follows how the newsboys, with the help of reporter Katherine Plumber, stand up for themselves and showcase the power of "the little man."

For ATEC senior Bonnie Abbott, the stage manager for this year's production, the themes within the musical are strikingly relevant today. The musical is based on the real-life Newsboys Strike of 1899, when the U.S.'s two most prominent publishers — Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst

- agreed to keep the high price of newspaper bundles after the Spanish-American War and discontinued the practice of buying back newspapers. This had a disastrous impact on the Newsboys and caused them to stop selling newspapers and hold rallies to demand change.

"I think right now, we're in a time where the workforce is changing and shifting," Abbott said. "I think "Newsies" is topical just because it's kids talking about how they don't want to work for bad wages or bad work hours ... but it's definitely for ... giving young people a voice and a place at the table."

As stage manager, Abbott's job includes practical notes like creating schedules and calling out cues but also emotional support for the team.

"I love it [stage management] because it happens in the shadows ... And as much as the actors are talented and as much as the techs are talented, somebody has to coordinate all of that," Ab-



Due to inflation, the newsies are unable to continue selling papers and their strike gets them barred from entering Joseph Pulitizer's publishing companies.

bott said. "It's a lot of emotional work, too, because people will come up crying and they need to vent and all of that. And so being present for them ... is just a word of encouragement for stage managers."

ATEC senior Dakota Britvich played main character Jack Kelly. Britvich's portrayal of an iconic character was partly inspired by his own experience

SEE **NEWSIES**, PAGE 10

PRISCILLA CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

portrayed by newcomer Cailee Spaeny, and her performance is subtle but speaks volumes to female audiences. She is able to play a youthful spirit constrained by the role of a woman and wife while showing sparks of fury under the surface. While adolescence and young adulthood are a time for wild emotions, Priscilla had to bite her tongue and keep a "mature" image to satisfy Elvis, and Spaeny makes this frustration palpable. Jacob Elordi commonly plays the antagonistic men in his works, but his portrayal of Elvis was bone chilling. One minute the charming, beloved musical idol, the next a temperamental and indifferent husband. His quick duality was unpredictable, and it is easy to feel

as enamored and terrified as Pricilla did.

The movie's visuals drive its characters and narrative, best exemplified by the two actors' alarming physical contrast. Elordi is 6'5" while Spaeny is 5'1", making her look innocent and timid while her partner dominates any room he is in. Priscilla purposefully fades into the shadows of her own movie, despite the bold fashion and baubles she is surrounded by. The close up shots of Priscilla applying heavy makeup, the beautiful scenes of Graceland, and the dainty details of her outfits speak louder than the simple dialogue. Her appearance itself tells the audience where we are in her life, from her schoolgirl uniform and lack of makeup to her iconic black hair and bold makeup.

To be a woman is to perform, and Coppola perfectly portrays this quiet



A24 | COURTESY

exhaustion of being a woman struggling to balance her own needs while taking on the burden of her partner's wants. This film is vulnerable and shows the discomfort in an age gap romance that Elvis fanatics choose to ignore. Priscilla's coming of age story isn't joyful. But her isolation and unspoken opinions and dreams created an audience full of women who feel understood and connected to their femininity.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

campus. Another Delegad@s fellow, Saul Vicente Leon Dubon, said that there aren't enough classes available to these students.

"Bring in more faculty and strengthen the Latin American program, not just in history or humanities, but also in art and political science," Dubon said. "We can have fellowships or scholarships to encourage students to study and research more issues regarding Latin America."

Dia de Muertos is a Mexican holiday that commemorates the dead, but these events were open to all students of different ethnicities and races to bridge the barriers between one another. The Dia De Muertos Symposium was meant to transcend constructed barriers of culture, space and time in the same way that Dia de Muertos

breaks down the barrier between the afterlife and the living world.

"I think that anybody, no matter what you are, you're able to get something out of it [the events]," Delegad@s fellow Isaac Del Bosque said. "We're trying to include everybody and hopefully, everybody can learn from each other."

The event captured Dia de Muertos' atmosphere as an intimate family tradition. Music, storytelling, food and drink came together to make the holiday fun and fes-

"The most important thing is to show the name of our center to students," Dubon said. "One part of this event is to commemorate the traditions and whatnot, but also give support to the center, and perhaps the university can hire more faculty that deals with Latin Americans and to have a bigger presence on campus."

Art exhibit at SP/N gallery north of campus highlights fragile relationship of humans with environment



ART BY ELIZABETH MELLOTT ALL PHOTOS BY GREGORY BINU | MERCURY STAFF

SOFIA MEINARDUS Mercury Staff

The "Grounded: Art Exhibition" at the SP/N Gallery at UTD, curated by Marilyn Waligore, professor of photography at UTD's Bass School, captures the urgency of humans' fragile relationship with the environment.

'Grounded" offers a compelling reflection on our environment through the lens of photography and video. The exhibition is open from Oct. 13 to Nov. 18, 2023 and aims create a conversation about humans' impact on the planet and the need for sustainable practices. As visitors explore the gallery, they encounter a diverse array of works all centered on the themes of "grounded," shining a spotlight on the interconnections between people and the planet and inviting viewers to contemplate the current state of our environment.

The exhibition includes work from Becky Wilkes, an artist from Azle, Texas on Eagle Mountain Lake, whose thought-provoking piece titled "A Bad Wrap" demands attention. Wilkes ingeniously transforms discarded wrappers into art, compelling the viewers to confront the environmental impact of our consumption habits. Her work encourages viewers to reflect upon the consequences of their actions and find ways to reduce waste and protect the planet.

"It's a gorgeous exhibition, and I'm just tickled that Marilyn selected my works to hang in here," Wilkes said.

"A Bad Wrap" is an artwork made from 215 wrappers collected from a mile of lakefront. This archival pigment print, measuring 40 by 40 inches, serves as an unsettling reminder of the pollution plaguing our natural landscapes.



ART BY KALEE APPLETON

"Basically, any kind of wrapper that I came across, I started photographing ... Each wrapper, to me, is a fingerprint of a choice that was made ... [whether] accidental or intentional," Wilkes said. "It's all trash, and it's a decision that shouldn't have happened."

Wilkes' artwork focuses specifically on the environmental issues surrounding Eagle Mountain Lake, which receives runoff from a watershed spanning over 800 square miles despite the lake itself covering only 14 square miles. The influx of water during rainstorms carries debris from streets, ditches and storm sewers to the lake's shore. Wilkes' artwork explores the flood of pollution runoff and need for public awareness and action.

"When it rains, it's like a great big toilet has flushed ... That's why the project is called 'Ditched'," Wilkes said. Another remarkable artist featured in the exhibition is Elizabeth Mellott, a professor of photography and servicelearning coordinator at Collin College in Plano, Texas. Her artwork captures

the delicate balance between nature and



ART BY BECKY WILKES

human intervention, evoking a sense of urgency to protect and safeguard our ecosystems. Mellott's artwork stems from her personal experiences, mainly as a beekeeper, and from her exploration of the environment.

"I didn't know anything about native plants or pollinator plants or beneficial plants, so it led me down this path of learning about the environment,"

SEE **GROUNDED**, PAGE 12

THE ROSE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

the venue, bringing a wave of cheers. The band took the stage amidst orange fog and the theater erupted into a display of vibrant colors as fans illuminated the space with their light sticks. Beginning with a slow introspective melody, the audience was immersed in a world of selfreflection and inner turmoil.

"Dawn," an instrumental song, filled the theater with an ethereal ambiance while the band became accustomed to the stage. Black Roses, adorned in flower crowns and touches of casual grunge, swayed to the music, immersed in the pop-rock fusion. Anticipation reached its peak as the band gathered onstage and officially kickstarted the concert with the emotionally charged ballad "You're Beautiful."

Led by Woosung on the electric guitar and Dojoon on the piano, The Rose kicked off their next two songs, "Shift" and "Lifeline." Woosung's magnetic voice effortlessly navigated the twists and turns of the melody with smooth modulation. He harmonized beautifully with the mellow acoustic guitar and captured the deep emotions of both songs. As "Lifeline" reached its end, the band paused to formally introduce themselves, allowing fans to personally connect with Woosung, Dojoon, bass guitarist Jaehyeong and drummer Hajoon.

Fans cheered in excitement, and the

four members asked the audience to turn their light sticks red for the next song. With hints of electronic elements, The Rose performed the popular track "RED," transforming the stadium into a sea of crimson lights and fervent voices. Woosung's animated gestures and passionate voice encouraged fans to sing along. As the song peaked, both guitarists traveled across the stage, getting the audience to jump in unison.

Moving forward, The Rose dove into their discography, performing crowd favorites "Back To Me" and the anthem "Yes." Fans changed the colors of their light sticks to match the mood of the songs, allowing the audience to immerse themselves in the lyrics and the band's inspirational message of living a life full of hope and resilience.

Before playing the heartfelt "I.L.Y.," Woosung introduced Jaehyeong and Hajoon as the lead vocalists for the song, creating an intimate and tender atmosphere. Bathed in soft yellow lights, their silhouettes framed a picture of vulnerability and emotional depth as the two singers delivered a flawless performance, showcasing the band's versatility as both instrumentalists and vocalists.

After "I.L.Y.," the lights dimmed, and the theatre turned into a sea of deep blues and purples for "Time." Transitioning to "Beauty and the Beast," ethereal church bell chimes resonated throughout the venue, bringing a haunting creativity to the performance as the screen behind the



stage filled with hourglasses and ticking

With an extensive setlist, The Rose guided the audience through a musical journey of their hit songs "Dusk," "Angel" and "Alive," unique energy animating each track. They then took a moment to express their gratitude to fans before moving into "Sorry." The Rose charted on the Billboard Top 200 with their September album "Dual," and thanked fans for making it possible through their sup-

"We believe that as human beings we are not special, but we believe that the music we listen to and that we share is very special, so thank you," Woosung

As the concert drew to a close, The Rose created a sense of unity with "Cure," "Cosmo" and "Wonder." Wrapping up, the backtrack of "Wonder" continued

to play as the band took a memorable picture with the entire crowd, holding a Texas flag and a flag that read "Happy Birthday Jaehyeong." As the band got ready to leave the stage, all the members threw roses into the crowd.

The Dawn to Dusk concert by The Rose brought raw emotions and beautiful, real vocals to Texas, showing both their musical skill and their dedication

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

animatronics hungry for children's lives. Fans of the franchise know how complicated the timeline of the lore is, so director Tammi's efforts to stay true to the original storyline is appreciated.

The changes in the original plot add a new level of emotion with the viewer's connection to Mike Schmidt. As he tries to discover the fate of his younger brother, their relationship pulls at the audience's heartstrings, knowing that no matter the

outcome, his brother is never coming back from the dead. It is this injustice that

brings the film's story to life. Animatronics Freddy, Bonnie, Chica and Foxy were the highlights of the movie due to their threatening, visceral realism. The movie uses actors in practical suits and some CGI to portray the characters, making them more menacing and lifelike, immersing viewers in the dark, claustrophobic environment of the pizzeria.

In the video game, the security guard must carefully watch security cameras and selectively shut doors to survive until 6 a.m. If the movie directly copied this setup, you might as well just watch a streamer play the game. Luckily, the film avoids a boring repeat by seamlessly blending new characters and plotlines with beloved lore to create a thrilling film that is intriguing to not only longtime fans but casual viewers as well. Some fans were saddened by the film's PG-13 rating, despite the franchise primarily appealing to youths, but the rating was on par with the games, which rarely showed violence outright.

Despite the movie being rated PG-13, it included images of blood and a decapi-

tated body, which was far gorier than what is expected of a movie with that rating. Although the movie had minor jump scares, the unnerving size of the animatronics and their ability to come to life is what made it truly terrifying. "Five Nights at Freddy's" is a wildly fun adventure that allows fans of the franchise to bask in the nostalgia of seeing their favorite horror characters in a new light. For devoted fans who want a film that captures the spirit of the lore with an original twist, "Five Nights at Freddy's" is now showing in theaters.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

such as Walmart, Smartpress or Mixbook could allow for the creation of custom Temoc-themed calendars throughout the year.

"I was at a dinner with Dean Holmes, and I was like 'How do I make this conversation interesting?" economics freshman Trisha Omolon said. "So I talked about the Temoc calendar. I think it is amazing that people can take Temoc and make him into their own thing."

Holmes, Dow and Omolon all mentioned that Temoc is both a divisive and unique figure among the student body. Omolon stands with the 69% of surveyed students that would prefer a fireman style Temoc calendar, due to the mascot's "piping hot" qualities. Even with the requirement of 12 different visuals for each month, there are enough themed images and fan art of Temoc to create multiple calendars highlighting the dynamic and varied interests of the student body.

"Temoc is definitely a polarizing mascot, some people like him while some think he is scary," Holmes said. "I am definitely on the fan



JACOB WOODALL | MERCURY STAFF

she's working ... So I've dealt with catcalling and inappropriate stuff in school and workplaces, so I tried to pull some of my disgust," Lemonds said.

> The production had to be temporarily shut down due an outbreak of COVID-19 in the cast, with its original late October opening night being pushed forward to

November. Despite this, the cast worked

"Everybody bounced back in the first dress rehearsal ... the runs just kept getting better and better and better each night up until opening night," said Saba.

Abbott believes that despite the stress, there are moments that make the hard work worth it for her.

"The moments where I see the trust that an actor gives me ... they'll tell me something or they'll come to me and be like, I need help with this ... Then, the moments where a call happens just perfectly," Abbott said.

UTD's theater draws students from all walks of life. Students who act or work in theater shows don't need a specific major.

"We have a lot of students at UTD ... that had either danced most of their lives or really been involved in theater, but chose something else as their major ... and then they come to UTD and they find out, no, you don't have to give that up, you can be a biology major or an engineering major and you can still dance, act, sing," said Saba.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

as a queer individual, and how he saw Jack as queer-coded.

"[I used] the queer experience as a way to demonstrate hope through found family and the fight for rights ... the fight for rights is something that's very topical nowadays, the fight for trans rights, queer rights, abortion rights ... The whole thing of "Newsies" is that ... the children's workers' rights was the thing that kind of started all that off," Britvich said.

Megan Lemonds, a visual and performing arts senior, played Katherine Plumber, one of the show's leads. She watched the Broadway musical on Disney+ and pulled from her own personal experiences to create her character.

"She has several entrances on stage where she's getting hit on by men, and it's a little uncomfortable for her because

to adapt. Micki Saba, the choreographer of the musical, attests to how the cast worked around this challenge.

Editorial

RED LIGHT UTD SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICIES THREATEN COMETS' LIBERTIES F.I.R.E.

UTD should amend its Student Grievances policy to match the definition of sexual harassment in its Sexual Misconduct Policy. While firm anti-harassment policies are important and necessary, inconsistent and extrajudicial definitions of sexual harassment threaten students' constitutional right to free speech.

The Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression, a nonprofit

dedicated to protecting free speech on US college campuses, has declared Student Grievances a "red light" policy, meaning its content is unconstitutional. FIRE claims the policy defines sexual harassment too broadly, leaving room for UTD to censor students for speech protected by federal law. And UTD already has a poor track record around speech — earlier this year, UTD sanctioned

a Comet for insulting traffic cops using obscene but constitutionally protected expression. A letter from FIRE prompted UTD to reverse the sanctions, but the precedent of over policing free expression in the name of school policy has already been established.

Other universities have already used loose sexual harassment policies to unfairly restrict student expression. In 2017, a group of Arcadia University students created an art exhibit criticizing then-President Donald Trump, depicting his likeness on a penis. Arcadia investigated these students under Title IX — sexual harassment law — even though this is completely protected speech. While the investigation was dropped, a legal battle could have ensued — and even if the Arcadia

students won, campus morale would be shaken. Who would feel safe expressing themselves if it could end in an expensive court case? The university would be practicing soft censorship.

UTD has two policies on punishable sexual misconduct, each offering different definitions. UTD-

SEE **RED LIGHT**, PAGE 12

MARIA SHAIKH

Opinion Editor

Fatimah Azeem

FATIMAH AZEEM



JACK SIERPUTOWSKI

MIA NGUYEN Life & Arts Editor

Antisocial campus? Try sports

Embracing sports culture at UTD will bring Comets together and invigorate campus

KARLEY BOLENBAUGH
Mercury Staff

UTD's lack of a sports culture is a direct culprit for the school's lack of a social scene. Luckily, this is something Comets can easily change by stepping outside their comfort zone and giving sports a try.

It's no secret UTD has a unique student culture when compared to most public universities. In 2018, the Princeton review ranked UTD No. 4 for most unhappy student body population. This is hardly a surprise —a quick trip to the school's unofficial Reddit page shows a wall of daily complaints. UTD students are not happy. But why?

UTD lacks a vibrant social atmosphere or any sense of community. Several factors contribute to this: a large population of commuters, an academically-focused student body and a lack of school pride.

Commuting is an unchangeable factor and academics should never be ignored, but the lack of school pride that exists at UTD can and should be improved upon. The easiest way for Comets to do so is to invest their time in the school, particularly in live sporting events.

Being able to share our excitement or sadness at our school's wins or loses creates a sense of community that is sorely lacking on campus — sports are a huge morale booster. A 2022 study published by Frontiers in Public Health found that attending live sporting events not only decreases loneliness, but also increases life satisfaction. Attending games can not only boost school spirit, but a person's spirit as well, leading to a better, happier UTD.

Engaging with concerts and clubs are good ways to break into social life at UTD, but campus sports represent the heart of

the school itself and are the pinnacle of social events. Our sports teams represent our school and our school alone, as they are a reflection of every Comet on campus. And attending games is a way for all Comets, regardless of interests, to come together and show our school pride.

I will admit, even I am not the biggest athletics fan. Until I came to UTD, I had only been to one or two basketball games, a football game and a handful of hockey games years ago. But since attending UTD, I have found a love for being a part of the audience and cheering my fellow Comets on. The stands may not be packed, but the excitement that ripples throughout it every time a three-pointer or a goal is made tells me that a full crowd could work wonders for

If convenience is a worry, it's never been a better time to follow UTD sports. Recently,



YIYI DING | MERCURY STAFF

UTD's athletics department revamped their website and merch, making it easier than ever to access news about games and show support. Admittance to any UTD game is free with a Comet Card and provides a great opportunity to meet and socialize with fellow Comets, as well as support our student athletes.

hletes. UTD's sports teams are wildly successful and worth watching. The UTD women's basketball team won the ASC championship title their last season, the men's soccer team grabbed an ASC win this season, UTD's esports team is currently ranked top 12 in the nation and our football team is undefeated. Of course, we don't actually have a

SEE **ANTISOCIAL**, PAGE 12

Abbott's failures unmask the facade of "school choice"

SHUBHAM SHEKHAR JHA | MERCURY STAFF

School voucher programs siphon money away from public education, and UTD could become collateral damage



JUSTIN KIM Courtesy

The Texas Legislature's fourth special session is underway, with the House committee advancing the school voucher bill after the previous special session saw stalemate on the issue. Despite Gov. Greg Abbott's relentless crusading, the legislature's hesitance to pursue voucher programs shows that Texans see "school choice" for what it really is: an attack on K-12 public education. Comets should take heed of how these initiatives strip schools of their resources and damage education as a whole.

Abbott has long urged for providing education savings accounts, or ESAs, which divert public funds to private schools. ESAs are taxpayer-funded savings accounts that parents can use to pay for private school expenses. According to the Legislative Budget Board, implementing SB 1—the voucher bill that passed the Sen-

ate last session — would have had a biennial cost of \$500 million. Thus, a voucher program would not only decrease funding and enrollment in public schools but pose a significant financial burden on the state as well.

financial burden on the state as well. The current push for school vouchers is just the latest in the Texas GOP's series of attacks on public education. During the regular session, Republicans successfully passed a bill that bans certain books from school libraries (HB 900), a bill that bans DEI offices on public university campuses (SB 17), and a bill that weakens tenure at public universities (SB 18). These laws limit academic freedom, hurt the multiculturalism of our campuses and make Texas universities less competitive overall. Moreover, they demonstrate that attacks on public education are not limited to primary and secondary schools, but target col-

SEE **VOUCHERS**, PAGE 12

OPINION

GROUNDED CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

For the exhibition, Waligore selected two highly poisonous plants from Mellott's submission, one of them being "Hemlock, Conium maculatum." Mellot said that Waligore focused on how people take advantage of the Earth in order to make them think about it.

"When a plant's poisonous, we have no choice, we must respect that plant because it has greater power than us," Mellott said. "I didn't think about that ... the tables kind of turned."

In "Hemlock, Conium maculatum" and "Deadly Nightshade, Atropa belladonna," Mellot explores the tall stature of hemlock and the small size and poisonous roots of deadly nightshade. She juxtaposes images of created spaces, drawing attention to the contradiction in how humans treat the Earth and prompting viewers to reflect on what they

accept and reject in terms of environmental impact.

"I'm just hoping that people think about it a little more than what I used to ... I just took what was fed to me ... I hope it makes them just think a little," Mellott

Both Wilkes' and Mellot's works contribute to the exhibition by providing a platform to engage in environmental issues and encourage viewers to reflect on their own personal responsibility in shaping a sustainable future. By showcasing the power of art as a catalyst for change, the exhibition inspires and advocates for environmental awareness and

"It was a curated show, so every piece was a conversation with the other pieces," Mellott said.

By bringing together talented artists like Becky Wilkes and Elizabeth Mellot, the exhibition not only enriches the cultural landscape but also encourages a multidisciplinary approach to ad-



GREGORY BINU | MERCURY STAFF

Becky Wilkes with her piece "A Bad Wrap," a 40x40 archival pigment print of 215 wrappers collected from a mile of lakefront.

dressing environmental concerns. "Grounded: Art Exhibition" at UTD's SP/N Gallery is a mustsee event that promises to ignite dialogue, spark introspection and inspire action. By exploring the

artworks at Grounded, visitors will understand the urgent need for environmental preservation

and the uncertain future that faces our world.

RED LIGHT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

SP5005, the red-lighted Student Grievances policy, defines sexual harassment as "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature." UTDBP3102, the Sexual Misconduct policy, has received a yellow rating from FIRE, signaling a better but legally unclear policy. It defines hostile environments via sexual misconduct as anything so severe it prevents someone from "[participating] in or [benefiting] from an education program or activity."

While both policies read similarly to an untrained eye, only the latter abides by the definition of punishable harassment established by the Supreme Court in Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education. All speech is constitutionally protected unless it

harms someone's educational experience so much "that the victim-students are effectively denied equal access to an institution's resources and opportunities," after which it becomes punishable. Vaguely-worded prohibitions like UTDSP5005's "other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature" legislate beyond the Constitution's limits.

This vague wording could be used by admin to censor vast territories in UTD culture. If AMP, our campus' satire wanted to print an issue with a pinup-style shirtless Temoc on the cover, the university could investigate them for "conduct of a sexual nature." If Comets wanted to host a drag or burlesque show, it could be restricted for a similar reason. Even our famed annual Sex Bowl could be targeted by explicit or indirect censorship.

UTD students should espe-

cially fear administrative overreach considering how state legislation from the past year has exposed Texas' hostile attitude to minorities in public education. Texas recently passed a "drag ban" for public spaces including universities; the now-overturned law prohibited "sexually explicit" material from appearing in public, including gendered prosthetics and dancing, both nonsexual keystones in LG-BTQ+ communities. In effect, this law prohibited people's free expression using sexualization as an excuse. Loose sexual harassment laws can similarly censor gender and sexual minorities, by declaring gender-nonconforming presentation or drag shows as "conduct of a sexual nature."

Colleges are the heart of our culture's free discourse, and they should be a safe environment to challenge ideas and debate. UTD, at the forefront of demographic diversity, should support that. Instead, these open-ended policies can leave students confused on what is and is not permissible and allow admin to harass students for simply expressing themselves. Actual legally-defined harassment will go unchecked while the university wastes resources on non-issues.

While the Sexual Misconduct policy has a yellow rating, it abides more closely by constitutional limits, and is thus harder to exploit. The end goal for all public universities should be to stringently defend protected speech, but the first step toward that is amending UTD's red-light policy to match legal standards. The Mercury believes in swift and fair punishment for sexual harassers and condemns misuse of these serious policies for other reasons.

We call on UTD to honor the diverse, provocative and important beliefs on campus by amending the Student Grievances policy's definition of sexual harassment to match that given in the Sexual Misconduct policy. And we call on all Comets who value free expression to be vocal until this is achieved. Contact Student Government until they introduce a resolution and educate yourself on your First Amendment rights. And while you should never hurt or prey on others under the guise of "free speech," do not censor art or conversation you fear is too sexual for the university to handle. Unless it meets the government's definition of harassment, you have the right to

ANTISOCIAL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

football team, but our very real and very talented existing teams continue to be successful year after year. But those successes feel halflived and unappreciated if no one celebrates them. Banding around our peers' wins is what brings students together.

Lacking a football team doesn't define campus sports or make student athletes' work any less thrilling or engaging. UTD has conferencewinning basketball teams, championship-winning soccer teams and a plethora of other sports teams that don't get enough support for their incredible achievements. UTD students should be proud of all aspects of the school they attend, not just the academics. Going to just one or two sporting events a semester will not only boost your own involvement at UTD, but also increase overall school pride and social cul-

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

leges as well — an alarming notion for our university.

Public schools in Texas are underfunded to begin schools would disproportionwith — as reported by the National Education Association, Texas ranked 38 out of the 50 states in public school per-student expenditures during the 2021-22 school year. Voucher programs would only exacerbate this underfunding and, by extension, the existing socioeconomic inequality in our state. Education remains a key factor in economic mo-

bility, and school districts in economically-depressed areas experience particularly lackluster funding. Siphoning funds from public schools to give to private and religious ately hurt already underprivileged groups and perpetuate multigenerational poverty.

Due to existing funding inequality, rural school districts would be among the most severely affected if a voucher program passes. A number of rural Republican legislators understood this and stood alongside Democrats in opposition to school vouchers dur-

ing the third special session. House Speaker Dade Phelan, a Republican from Beaumont, has embodied this opposition in his requests for school funding guarantees within any voucher legislation. In making these requests, he has butted heads with Abbott and Lt. Gov. Patrick proving that Abbott's agenda is divisive even within his own party.

This push can also be seen as an extension of the Republicans' injection of "Christian values" in education. Many of the schools that benefit from

tions like the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops have been among the strongest advocates for voucher programs. Providing taxpayer dollars to these religious (usually Christian) schools means eroding the separation of church and state, a fundamental principle of American public education.

As a public university, UTD is directly affected by the Texas Legislature's educational policies. Furthermore, a large part of our student body comes from public high schools in Texas and underschools. Public high schools experiencing even worse underfunding means that educational standards will suffer, which will result in students struggling academically once they enter UTD, or public sentative or senator and sharschool students being denied admission in favor of their private school counterparts. Is this the kind of campus environment that we want to create? It's imperative for Comets to use their understanding to argue for a more robust public school system, and against a corporate or religious takeover

showing support to organizations that oppose school vouchers, like the Texas AFT or Raise Your Hand Texas. Voicing opposition to school vouchers to your state repreing sentiments through social media or word-of-mouth will demonstrate student opposition to the Texas legislature. So please, take a few minutes to email a representative and help defend the integrity of public schools and universi-

stands firsthand the challenges vouchers are religious instituof education. tions, and religious organizaof insufficient resources in our Comets can contribute by ANIKA SULTANA | MERCURY STAFF

